

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



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Veterans Recycle and Return to the Environment

The Member

James H. Quillen VA Medical Center is a tertiary care facility providing a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research. Comprehensive health care is provided through primary care, tertiary care, and long-term care. In addition to providing acute care, the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center offers geriatric and rehabilitation services through its 120-bed Community Living Center and a 348-bed Domiciliary that offers a variety of treatment options, including Homeless Outreach and inpatient treatment. The Medical Center has an active affiliation with the James H. Quillen College of Medicine which is co-located on the facility's campus and the campus of East Tennessee State University. Over 300 University residents, interns, and students are trained at the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center each year. Additionally, university affiliations with our medical center include nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, social work, and psychology.

The Story

The Mountain Home Domiciliary (Dom) provides temporary lodging for homeless veterans, and those undergoing treatment or awaiting procedures. The building in which they reside also serves as an administrative area and the location of primary care offices. As such, the building is a high traffic area. The facility's Green Environmental Management (GEMS) Committee is always looking for new avenues for recycling. It was proposed that Dom residents may be able to assist in this goal. The Dom Resident Council suggested to staff that they be able to implement an aluminum recycling program and utilize the proceeds for various projects. The GEMS committee agreed and provided the residents with containers, replacement bags, and support within the facility. The residents agreed to collect the cans

and provide upkeep of the collection areas as there has been reluctance within the facility to conduct aluminum can recycling because of the potential for insects to be attracted, which could be detrimental to a hospital setting.

The Success

The recycling program was rolled out slowly to selected areas to ensure that there were no negative issues related its implementation. To date it has been a success. Cans are removed from the facility's waste stream while residents receive funds for various projects. A notable and unexpected result was that some of the funds were used to buy seeds and tools needed to plant a small vegetable garden on the Mountain Home grounds. It seemed particularly fitting that funds received from recycling were used to put back into the environment in the form of a garden.



The Pollution Prevented

Over the first four months of the new program, the average of 136 pounds was recycled each month. Not only does this serve to prevent over 1600 lbs. and approximately 3 cubic yards of waste from entering the landfill annually, but it also conserves resources and gives veterans a helping hand.

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